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Proposal for a Management Plan

Public Comment

Prince Albert National Park

December 19

■✚ Parks Canada Parcs Canada

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A. PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN PROPOSAL

In May 1979, Parks Canada released a summary of the management plan proposed for Prince Albert National Park and requested public review and comment. A copy of the document was sent to people whose names were on the mailing list developed during the planning of Waskesiu Visitor Centre. Additional background information was also made available. As well, advertisements were placed in Saskatchewan and some Alberta newspapers to inform the public of the review program, and a display was set up in public libraries in Prince Albert and Saskatoon outlining the plan proposal and encouraging participation in the planning program. Public meetings were held in Prince Albert, Saskatoon, and Waskesiu in June and July, 1979. Meetings with special interest groups were also held on request.

A total of about 400 people participated in the review, mostly by attending public meetings. Eighty-four written submissions were received.

A study of the public input shows two general themes. One is an overall acceptance of Parks Canada's proposed development approach to Prince Albert National Park. Although there were some people who felt the minimal approach to park development would not provide enough facilities for visitors, most approved in principle. The second theme is a feeling of concern for the park and its resources. Even those who proposed additional development generally did so within the context of long-term preservation.

Most people who wrote or who spoke in public meetings did have some specific question they wished to raise or proposal to make for change in the draft management plan. Those most frequently made are discussed below. The order is the same as that used in the plan proposal booklet.

Park Objectives

1. The park objectives were generally accepted as describing Parks Canada's mandate in Prince Albert National Park.

Zoning

1. A number of people found it difficult to comment on the proposed zoning without knowing what use regulations would apply. This was particularly true of Parks Canada's proposal to delete the previously designated Class I, Special Preservation Zone, from the Moose Creek wolf denning area, south-west of Waskesiu Lake. The removal of the Class I zone was accepted provided that Parks Canada institute a program of seasonal use restrictions which are clearly established and which apply to both the public and park operations.

Response

The importance of protecting wolves during denning season is agreed. Seasonal use restrictions will be maintained to continue this protection.

2. The expansion of Class I (Special Preservation) and Class II (Wilderness) zones proposed by Parks Canada was largely commended.

3. The proposal showed an area immediately south and west of Waskesiu designated as Zone IV (Recreation). A number of participants suggested that this area should receive Zone III classification due to its present and planned uses.

Zoning cont'd.

Response

This is being considered in the preparation of the final plan.

4. Lake zoning is discussed under the heading "Lake Use".

Resource Management

1. A number of submissions requested Parks Canada to make more use of fire as a management tool to preserve the fescue grasslands and animal habitat within the park, and to replicate natural processes.

Response

Parks Canada recognizes that fire plays a role in the maintenance of natural ecosystems and will continue research into its use as a management tool. The results will be incorporated into a park conservation plan describing specific resource management objectives and programs.

2. A problem was identified as elk and beaver from within the park sometimes damage crops of neighbouring farmers.

Response

This will be considered during preparation of the park conservation plan and will be discussed with the province.

3. A problem was identified with inadequate control over fishing. Some participants said there is not enough checking of fish catches, and felt that fines for overfishing are inadequate. Others suggested a program to stock walleye in Kingsmere and Waskesiu Lakes to improve the fishing.

Resource Management Cont'd.

Response

Management of sport fishing is being given greater emphasis in the park, both by enforcing regulations more carefully, and continuing research into the natural spawning of walleye. Parks Canada biologists do not recommend stocking as a method of improving fishing.

4. The idea of a free-roaming bison herd was supported if it can be safely managed within the park.

Access

1. There was general, although not complete, agreement with Parks Canada's proposal to restrict road access to present levels. Some participants felt that additional road access was required while others felt that the present access and road system was adequate.

2. There was general agreement that some park roads require reconstruction due to their poor condition. Some concern was expressed that the resurfacing of roads identified in the proposal would lead to their upgrading. It was stressed that the park roads should be low-speed, to permit travellers to see more of the park and its wildlife.

Response

Parks Canada appreciates the role of these roads as scenic routes, and does not intend to reconstruct them to higher speed designs.

Visitor Facilities

1. The number of campsites to be developed within the park inspired a number of comments. At one extreme was a proposal that there should be no expansion from the current number (553). This position is based on the irreplaceable nature of wildland resources, and the primacy of the protection aspect of Parks Canada's mandate. At the other extreme was a call for unlimited development in response to use pressures. Some correspondents recommended that Parks Canada should identify the park's recreational carrying capacity based on ecological research.

Response

Parks Canada agrees this is one of the key questions in planning the park. The proposed expansion limit was based on projections of demand, and is within the carrying capacity of the entire park. This additional capacity will only be developed in response to demonstrated sustained demand and campground design will be based on more detailed studies to ensure local carrying capacity is not exceeded.

2. The Halkett Lake campground was identified as needing upgrading due to crowding and conflicts between day-users and campers.

Response

An area plan has been prepared to guide the redevelopment of this facility and separate day use from camping.

3. The overflow campground in Waskesiu was described as an inadequate, unpleasant and inappropriate place to make people stay. Suggestions were made to relocate or upgrade this facility.

Response

The overflow campground was heavily used this summer, since park campgrounds were generally full during July and August. Minor upgrading will be done, but overflow campgrounds are not intended for regular use.

4. Recent improvements in winter use facilities were generally appreciated, but requests were made for winterized trailer facilities. Parks Canada was urged to proceed cautiously in extending the number of facilities open year-round in Waskesiu in order to avoid developing a major townsite.

Response

Agreed.

Visitor Facilities Cont'd.

5. Proponents of developing downhill skiing within the park at Delworth Hill requested changes in zoning and policy, and support of feasibility studies by Parks Canada to permit the proposal to proceed to the stage of investment analysis and environmental impact assessment. There was also considerable opposition to the idea from a number of respondents who felt that such a development was inappropriate in a national park, and would have high environmental impact.

Response

Parks Canada policy does not permit the development of any new downhill ski facilities.

Use of Lakes

The appropriate use of park lakes caused more discussion than any other single topic. It was generally accepted that Waskesiu and Halkett Lakes continue to be available for use by motorboats as well as non-motorized craft. Other lakes were the subject of competing proposals as outlined below.

1. Kingsmere

A considerable number of participants felt that Kingsmere Lake, giving access to the Grey Owl wilderness, should be closed to power boats. They recommended down-zoning this lake from the proposed Class IV to a more preservation-oriented Class III. Most respondents, however, concerned about the lake's size and often dangerous waters, recommended that the continued use of power boats should be permitted. Kingsmere was recognized as a different kind of lake from Waskesiu. Fishing was frequently identified as an appropriate activity on Kingsmere, while water skiing was often described as being inconsistent with the "feel" of the lake. Many users expressed a willingness for regulation of the lake use, either by establishing horsepower limits or prohibiting water skiing.

Use of Lakes Cont'd.

2. Crean and Hanging Hearts Lakes

There was less opposition to the use of motor boats on Crean Lake than on Kingsmere Lake. The major difficulty here was the use of Hanging Hearts Lakes, which are between Crean and Kingsmere. These smaller lakes were felt to be particularly susceptible to environmental damage from motorboats. They were also recognized as providing good opportunities for people to row and canoe in a relatively protected area. The quality of this experience would be reduced by permitting motorboats to pass through. The following specific suggestions were made to reduce these problems:

- extend road access to Crean Lake and close to Hanging Hearts Lakes to power boats.
- provide overnight storage for canoes, and upgrade picnic facilities on the Hanging Hearts Lakes.
- enforce a very low speed limit for motor boats passing through the Hanging Hearts Lakes.

3. Trappers and Namekus Lakes

These lakes are presently restricted to non-motorized use. This was generally accepted, although there was some expressed desire to allow controlled motorized use of Namekus Lake.

Response

All the proposals listed above are being considered in the preparation of the final plan.

Regional Issues

1. The Government of Saskatchewan expressed a willingness to cooperate with Parks Canada to develop more effective park boundaries, and to plan to respond to recreation demands at a regional scale.

Response

Parks Canada welcomes the opportunity to work with the Province, and will pursue this offer.

2. A number of submissions expressed support for expansion of the park so ecosystems could be better protected, and so the park could expand its recreation facilities.

Response

In order to enable effective management of existing resources, Parks Canada will continue to discuss minor boundary changes with the Province of Saskatchewan. No major park expansion will be sought.

Other Items

1. An ongoing planning committee was suggested, whereby area residents and park users could participate in park planning without requiring special programs.

Response

Planning issues are not considered significant enough at this time to warrant setting up a special committee. The Superintendent and his staff are available to discuss issues of concern to individuals or groups.

2. Some participants felt it is important for Parks Canada to set out a procedure, including an opportunity for public review, by which proposed changes to the management plan would be considered.

Response

The planning process for National Parks requires that plans be monitored and their implementation evaluated. Should changes in zoning be proposed, these are subject to public review.

Other Items Cont'd.

3. A number of people are concerned that Parks Canada's policy was not flexible enough. They proposed changes in policy to allow downhill skiing.

Response

The policy was thoroughly reviewed and updated in 1978, and was then approved by Cabinet. Proposals for change will be forwarded to program headquarters.

4. The importance of the park interpretive activity was stressed.

What Happens Next?

The proposed management plan is presently being redrafted as a result of public comments on it. When a review has been completed, the plan will be sent to Program Headquarters for final approval by the Minister. Once the plan is approved, a summary will be distributed.

To contact the Park, write to:

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Superintendent
Prince Albert National Park
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Waskesiu Lake, Saskatchewan
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The telephone number remains:

(306) 663-5322

DEVELOPMENTS IN WASKESIU

1. In the public meetings people raised a number of concerns and issues related to the visitor centre. Many were operational matters, such as the inconvenience and danger of long line-ups of trailers outside the trailer campground.

Response

The park staff took immediate action to solve or lessen these problems.

2. Other concerns related to the implementation of the plan for Waskesiu itself, which was approved in 1978. The upgrading of the seasonal campground was of concern, since costs for the new washroom facilities were much higher than originally estimated.

Response

The Portable Cabin and Cabin Tent Association is working with Parks Canada to develop a solution which is both economical and adequate to user needs.

3. Some people were seriously concerned about the relocation of the tennis courts which was part of the approved plan for Waskesiu. They felt it would be less enjoyable to play on tennis courts in the day-use area, because of cold and wind. They also feared that the soil was not stable enough to support courts and pointed out that it would be cheaper to rebuild on the existing base than to start anew.

Response

A serious reexamination of the location of the tennis courts was undertaken. As a result, Parks Canada has decided that, given the economic climate of the country and the climate of restraint, the expenditure of the money required to move the tennis courts and bowling green cannot be justified at this time. Instead, they will be maintained in their present location.

Date Due

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